The link: oral health and diabetes

More than 34 million children and adults in the U.S. have diabetes. Of those, 7 million are actually unaware of their condition. To top it off, it's estimated that 88 million people have prediabetes, a condition that increases the risk of developing Type 2 diabetes down the road.[1]

So what do these statistics and diabetes have to do with oral health?

Research has found a strong connection between periodontal (gum) disease and diabetes. People with diabetes not only are more likely to have gum disease, but can have a more advanced stage of the condition than those without diabetes.[2] It's important to know that anyone is susceptible, especially pregnant women who are at an increased risk for both gum disease and gestational diabetes due to a change in hormone levels.[1,3]

Unlike gum disease, diabetes is not always preventable. That's why regular dental visits are necessary in helping people at risk for diabetes become aware of the importance of maintaining good oral health. Proper care of the mouth, including treatment of gum disease, may even help people with diabetes achieve better blood sugar control.

Did you know?

More than 1 million Americans are diagnosed with diabetes each year.[1]

Quick bites

The following tips can help people with diabetes better manage their oral and overall health:

- Schedule regular dental cleanings at a frequency recommended by your dentist to help eliminate the source of bacteria associated with periodontal disease.
- Tell your dentist you have diabetes, and remind him or her of the status of your condition at each visit.
- Share your physician's and dentist's contact information so they can discuss proper treatment should an issue arise.
- Practice good oral health habits, such as brushing and flossing regularly and using a daily mouthwash.

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1. American Diabetes Association, "Diabetes Basics," web. **2.** Delta Dental Plans Association, "Research Review September 2009. Oral and General Health—Exploring the Connection. Associations Between Periodontal Disease and Diabetes Mellitus," web. **3.** American Pregnancy Association, "Pregnancy and Swollen Gums (Also Known as Pregnancy Gingivitis)," web.

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